

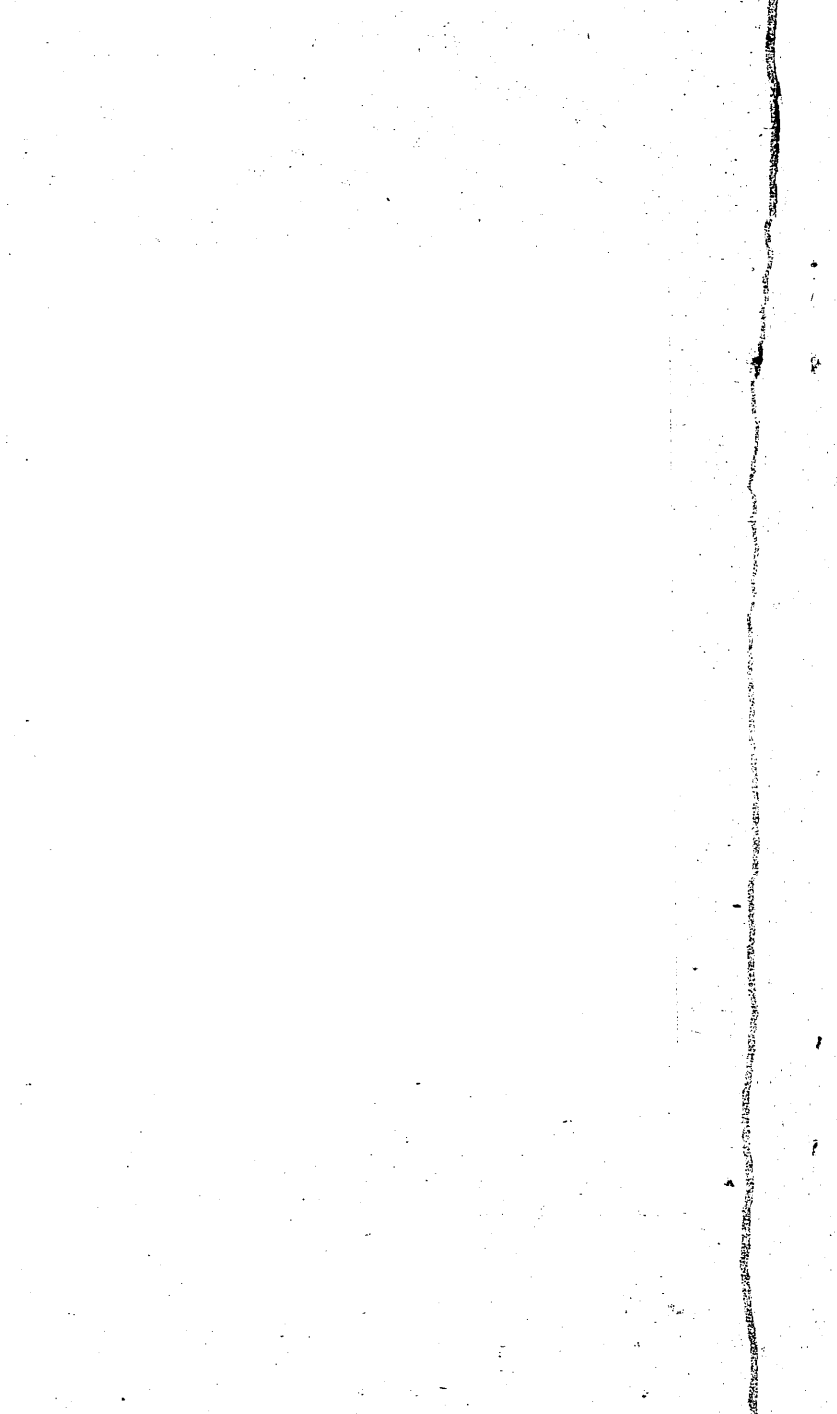


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The Critical Study of the Bible

By JOHN H. ALLEN





QUAKER HILL
S E R I E S

I. The Critical Study
of the Bible

by

REV. NEWTON MARSHALL HALL.

The Quaker Hill Conference is held annually, the first week in September, at Quaker Hill, Dutchess County, N. Y. It is a gathering for the promotion of Bible study, for the discussion of vital problems of the present day and for the quickening of the spiritual life.

THE CRITICAL STUDY OF THE BIBLE

AN ADDRESS

BY

REV. NEWTON MARSHALL HALL

PASTOR OF THE NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

DELIVERED AT THE THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE QUAKER
HILL CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER THE FOURTH,
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND ONE

PUBLISHED BY THE QUAKER HILL CONFERENCE ASSOCIATION
QUAKER HILL, NEW YORK
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W. V. Dwyer

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THE CRITICAL STUDY OF
THE BIBLE.

The critical study of the Bible is a necessary outcome of the scientific temper of the age. It is difficult to see how anyone can challenge the right of the scholar to study the Bible according to scientific methods. Admitting the most ultra-orthodox definition of inspiration to be the correct one, admitting the Bible to be the product, not of the mind of man, but of the mind of God, then there is all the more reason for the most searching and exhaustive study of its pages. The stars in the sky and the mineral in the earth are also the handiwork of God, but no one questions the right of the astronomer or of the geologist to apply scientific tests in their respective fields of research. Let us know the secret of flaming sun and journeying planet, we cry: delve into the earth, study its products, in order that we may learn their value and utilize them for the service of humanity. We want the truth about the Bible and all the truth about it. Surely every lover of the Bible must feel Milton's fine confidence in

the power of truth which he expresses in the "Areopagitica:" "Though all the windes of doctrin were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licencing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falshood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the wors in a free and open encounter?" It is impossible for anyone in these days to stay the hand of scientific investigation. It is impossible to put either the Bible or the scholar under lock and key. The church, then, should be absolutely friendly to the spirit of criticism, to all honest study of the Bible. We should say, here is our Bible, take it and examine it. The human body is the sacred temple of the spirit, but the anatomist has the right to dissect it, to learn the secret of its mysteries. The Bible is the word of God, but the scholar has the right to examine it with the utmost freedom. To deny the right of investigation would mean to return to the despotic intolerance of the Middle Ages. When, however, we come to the results of critical investigation, that is quite a different matter. We are bound by no law of truth or candor to accept every theory which may be thrust upon us. Because Prof. Puddenheim of Heidelberg hap-

pens to write a four-hundred page book to prove that Solomon's Song is composite, and finds traces of twenty-seven sources, I am under no obligation to hold that theory myself. The very best of scientists have been known to err. There has been too strong a tendency on the part of the radical school of critics to insist that the latest theory must be the incontestably true theory. Some men have escaped from the old orthodoxy, only to become slaves of a new orthodoxy of heterodoxy. They have ceased to say, I believe in the infallibility of the Scriptures, and have begun to say, I believe in the infallibility of the school of higher critics. To be open-minded is characteristic of the scientific spirit, but it is equally characteristic to accept no theory unless it approves itself to the reason and is supported by sufficient and incontestable evidence. Again, when a theory is admitted to be correct, the generalizations which are made upon the basis of that theory are not necessarily conclusive. For example, in the field of science, Prof. Koch announces that the bacilli of tuberculosis in cattle and in human beings are of different types, and not intercommunicable. His fellow scientists do not say, since this is the theory of the great Prof. Koch it must be true. In

the interests of truth they sharply challenge both the hypothesis and the deduction ; both must be proved before they are accepted.

With these principles in mind, let us examine the conclusions and the generalizations of the modern school of Biblical critics, upon what may be called the purely scientific or negative side of investigation. The attention of the school has been focused upon questions of date and authorship. Summing up, in a very rough manner, the conclusions which have been reached, we may say that the claim is made,

1. That certain books of the Bible were not written by the traditional authors, but are composite, that is to to say, compilations from various sources, arranged by a final compiler or redactor.

2. That certain books were not written at the traditional date assigned to them, but at a much later time.

In regard to some books these contentions may be regarded as having been proved beyond a reasonable doubt. How far this revision of data must go is a matter of dispute even among the critics themselves. There are no two scholars who exactly agree when the entire Bible is under consideration. Probably the last word

has not been said even in regard to the Pentateuch. Some ground has doubtless been gained and the men who, by patient and exacting study have brought to light new truth are entitled to all credit for the work which they have done.

The facts in themselves are, however, of far less importance than the generalizations which have been made from the facts. In the minds of many the integrity and trustworthiness of the Bible has been destroyed by the discoveries of the critics. I have heard men say with real emotion that their confidence in their mother's Bible had been destroyed. To them it is no longer a sacred volume, but merely a compilation of doubtful value, full of inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Here is a difficulty which cannot be lightly passed aside. It is perhaps the most important question before the church to-day. Must the Bible be rejected and a new basis of religious experience adopted? Are the Scriptures obsolete like the stage coach and the hand-printing press? Does our duty to truth demand that we discard these discredited documents and substitute a scientifically accurate statement in their place? For my own part I say emphatically, No.

Let us admit the broadest range of change

which the critics can make. Let every book in the Bible be composite, if you choose. Change all the dates which can be changed with any show of reason. Make the final redaction of the Pentateuch as late as you please. Place Amos just before the exile, or after the exile, and make all the Psalms post-exilic. What then? It does not follow by any inevitable consequence that the Bible is discredited and must be discarded by the lover of truth. It would not even necessarily destroy the orthodox theory of inspiration. The trouble with us moderns is, that we are always insisting upon applying to everything our scientific definitions of truth, by which we mean exact correspondence of detail, absolute perfection of development. Even with us there are varying standards of truth, or accuracy. For the carpenter, one-eighth of an inch is accurate, for the machinist one-sixty-fourth, for the physicist one one one-thousandth. Am I untruthful because I say that a room is twenty feet long instead of nineteen and nine hundred and ninety-eight one-thousandths feet? The critic who measures the Bible by 19th century standards of accuracy, and declares that he can see nothing divine in it because it varies one hair's breadth from his precon-

ceived notions of accuracy, is no less of a dangerous dogmatist than his unscientific brother of the 16th century, who measured it by an unvarying standard of verbal inspiration. Cannot God speak in broken and lisping and imperfect language if he chooses, so that his most simple and ignorant child may understand and be unafraid? Will you tell me how it would be possible to have a progressive revelation of truth extending over thousands of years, and all the time intelligible, without inconsistencies? The God who inspired the Bible is not a God of stereotyped formulae: he is a God of adaptation and variation, out of which beauty and perfection are born. The truth of the poet is no less a truth than the truth of the scientist. What if the first chapter of the Bible had been written in the language of the evolutionist, supposing the terminology now in vogue to be absolutely correct, of which we are by no means certain. That would have been a falsehood indeed! How many in all the ages, up to our own remarkable time, would have understood it, and how much the world would have lost without that marvellous poem in which the Lord God marshals the creative forces, and sets the stars singing in their courses, and causes the earth, born out of

chaos, to bring forth and blossom in beauty. Would the Darwinian theory have inspired Haydn's "Creation," or Milton's "Paradise Lost?" Take that mystic city of the Apocalypse, set up your surveying instruments in its streets, throw its gold into your melting pot, tell the world that your telescopes have never caught the gleam of its jewelled walls in the abysses of the ancient night, and you have not destroyed its reality for the soul which can discern the things which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. I do not think that any author of any book of the Bible has ever been convicted of deliberate and wilful falsehood. He wrote

"—the thing as he saw it

For the God of things as they are,"

only the thing as he saw it was not always the thing as we see it. What, then, is there to prevent us from laying down the principle that every apparent error or discrepancy or crudity is the result,

1, of an intentionally imaginative and poetic treatment of a theme ; or,

2, of a disregard for consistency of detail and scientific accuracy of statement, in an age when the value of such accuracy was not appreciated ; or,

3, of the adaptation of thought to suit the intellectual and spiritual necessities of

the childlike age in which the words were written ; or,

4, of a compilation from various sources, without that regard for accuracy, and sequence, and form, without that deft workmanship, which fits details together, and makes a consistent whole, which marks modern literature.

We may further claim that such deviations from scientific standards in any one book do not invalidate other portions of the Bible, or detract from the spiritual value of the passages in which they occur. We do not condemn all the literary productions of Dr. Holmes because in his poem, "The Chambered Nautilus," he talked about sea maids and sirens, when he knew very well that there are no such creatures, or because he said that the nautilus "stole with soft step the shining archway through," when his scientific attainments should have taught him that the chambered Nautilus is a creature which has no feet, and is, therefore, incapable of locomotion. Let us admit with all frankness that the study of critics has brought to light certain imaginative and inconsistent and inaccurate statements. What then? Why, let us correct our traditional impressions up to date, so far as we have indisputable evidence, and go on

our way rejoicing. Such minor inaccuracies and crudities of statement trouble me no more than does the ingenious, but wholly indefensible, spelling which characterizes my great-grandfather's diary, which I find in an old chest tucked away under the eaves of the garret. It is no reflection upon his character that he did not know how to spell according to the standards of the Century dictionary. If any man thinks that he must throw away his Bible because it does not conform to modern standards of accuracy, he is to be pitied.

Of course the admission that there is a single inaccuracy in the Bible involves a revision of the medieval theory of inspiration, which, I suppose, no one now holds except certain scholars who seem to have revived it in order to show that there is nothing divine about the Bible. Their reasoning seems to be: The Bible, to be inspired, must contain no inaccuracy; an inaccuracy is found, therefore the Bible is not inspired. But any theory of divine creation or immanence, in literature or life or nature, must involve the dwelling of the perfect within the imperfect, God working through star or book or man, to reach the great ends of his kingdom. The ultimate test of the inspiration of the Bible cannot be accuracy, ac-

according to the standards of the 14th or the 20th or the 40th centuries, but adaptability to the use which God intended it. The Bible is inspired because it reveals God to men and redeems them from their sins, and that is the only standard of inspiration possible.

So far from invalidating the Bible, the discovery that certain historical books are composite in parts, gives to it a singularly modern aspect. Is there any modern history that is not composite? How did John Fiske write his histories? He went to ancient sources; documents, letters, newspapers, speeches, songs, wherever he could find anything bearing upon his subject, then he sat down and wove his sources together, illuminating the whole by his own genius. Five thousand years hence some one may make the startling discovery that these histories were not actually written by the traditional author, but were only compiled by one Fiske. If the enterprising scholar who makes this discovery searches deeply he will find enough sources to employ all the letters of the alphabet to distinguish them. The mere fact that a book is compilation does not destroy its accuracy. It is impossible to tell what sources, since lost, the compiler may have had at his command.

The mere carrying forward of the date of a book has little or no bearing upon its value from the spiritual point of view. The importance of changes of this kind has been greatly exaggerated. To illustrate, let us suppose that there is an old cathedral in a certain quaint little town on the east coast of England, which I love to visit. I have always supposed that this cathedral was early Norman in origin, begun by one Hugo de Belville. One day I am sitting on a bench in a luxury of idleness, watching the birds as they fly in and out of the half ruined tower. An important little man comes bustling up and sits down beside me. He says that he has made a remarkable discovery. The old tower was not built by Hugo de Belville, and it is not as old by one hundred years as tradition has made it. He goes into an elaborate argument to prove his point, but at last he closes his books and goes away. Well, what do I care for his discovery? He has left me my cathedral. I enter softly its sacred precincts. There is the worn floor consecrated by the feet of saints and heroes, and the afternoon sun streams just as gloriously through its storied windows. Probably the little man was right, but I love my cathedral just the same. His theories do

not affect my enjoyment of all that makes it beautiful and significant. Here is my Bible. Every page of it has been hallowed by the blood and tears of saints and martyrs. It has been the refuge of the afflicted, the hope of the dying, the broad banner under which humanity has marched to victory, and won its painful way to God. A scholarly man comes along and convinces me that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, that Job is composite and the 23rd Psalm post-exilic. And then he goes away and leaves me—my Bible. I open its pages, I read the great unfolding drama of human life, of the sins of man and his struggles for righteousness, of the birth of the Son of God and his death upon the cross, and I lift up my hands to Heaven and cry, "Father, I thank thee that thou didst put thy message of warning and of redemption into the hearts of thy servants in all the ages."

I do not mean to say that questions of date and authorship are of no practical importance. We shall all welcome any light which may come to us upon these points, but is there not a broader field of usefulness before the modern scholar, who, obeying the spirit of the age, subjects the Bible to closest scrutiny? Must he expend all his energies in balancing probabilities in regard

to theories which in many cases can never be definitely settled, because sufficient data does not exist to enable the student to reach a conclusion beyond the reach of controversy?

Turning now to the positive side of the critical study of the Bible, the student ought above all else to keep the practical end constantly in view. He is not studying simply to discover facts, but to find the relation of facts to human life. There are very few scientists so cold-blooded as to admit that they have no purpose in view beyond the fact at the point of the knife or in the field of the microscope. It is for the good of humanity that they are working, for the increase of human effectiveness and happiness. After we have acknowledged the right of absolute freedom of inquiry, we must make the restriction that the student is not to approach the Bible in exactly the same temper in which the scientist enters his laboratory. The Bible is a sacred book. We have the right to demand that the scholar treat it with the utmost reverence. At the gate of a Buddhist temple in Japan, there is an inscription which reads something like this: "Stranger, of whatever nation or creed, enter these portals with respect, for this temple has been hallowed by

the worship of men for thousands of years." The man who sneers at the story of the manger at Bethlehem as an absurd and antiquated legend, is hardly in the proper temper to accomplish anything useful in Biblical study.

The attitude of the student should be first, reverent, then to the highest degree utilitarian. If your Bible were a clod of earth, then it might be classified and labeled and put away on the museum shelf. But the Bible claims to be a unique revelation of the "ways of God to man." It has vindicated that claim in its effect upon human life. Here are facts which no student has any right to ignore. What would you say of the geologist who should calmly leave out of account the history of the ages which is marked in fire and flood upon the rock, and subject it to an analysis based only upon modern methods of examination. The physician wants to know first of all the history of the case before him. No student of the Bible has any right to ignore its history which has been written upon human hearts. We are extremely proud of our 19th century of progress which has just passed. Examine the great departments of its higher life, literature, art, music, government, and you will find the dominant influ-

ence in them all, the Bible. Whence came the boasted freedom of the scholar, but from the Bible? Are we not then justified, in demanding of the scholar that he seek to heighten the effect which the Bible has produced upon the intellectual and spiritual life of the race? We stand to-day facing the great questions of human destiny. Sin, and selfishness and greed are to be overcome, society is to be purified and redeemed, the brotherhood of man is to be established, What weapons are we to use for the fight? Is there to be a new regeneration by multiplication table and logical definition? Will men grow purer as statistics multiply? If we know enough facts, shall we find God? Or rather, will not men continue to respond to the old appeal from heart to heart? Will not the cross of Christ continue to be the centre of the world's desire? If this is true, if there is to be an orderly progress of life in accordance with principles already laid down, then there is a splendid field open to the reverent student of the Bible; to make the book a still more effective agency in human progress, to explain and to illuminate, to throw light upon dark places, to make the old life with its supreme lessons live again, to arouse again the old passion of repentance and love and faith. The in-

ventor of the Gatling gun has just completed a plough which he claims will cultivate thirty acres of land in a day. The principle is exactly the same as that employed by the savage with his crooked stick, but how wonderfully are the results increased. In a similar way cannot modern scholarship increase the effectiveness of the Bible, until its harvest shall be a thousand fold, and the visions of its prophets be fulfilled in a new heaven and a new earth?

The preliminary work for what may be called a positive or constructive criticism, in distinction from a purely scientific examination of facts, has already been performed, in the identification of the various literary modes of expression used by the different authors. It is no small gain to have the strains of martial music, the burst of lyric passion, the solemn dirge, the triumphal march, so reproduced in modern typographical dress that each may be recognized by the reader at a glance. Beyond this point, a constructive criticism might proceed along the following lines :

1. The heightening of the influence of the Bible upon literature.

It is the custom of a commercial age to undervalue the influence of literature upon life, but no thoughtful man ever falls into

that error. He knows that the most utilitarian results have their origin in the emotions. Upon what is the really great mind fed in boyhood, but upon the dream-stuff of poets and sages? Now Homer is good dream-stuff, but the Bible is better. If I had my way, the Bible should be read in the public schools, instead of Latin and Greek, or in addition to Latin and Greek. I would put scholars at work to devise the most effective setting for a boy's and girl's Bible. Take the book of Jonah, one of the finest stories in the world. What does your German critic do with it? He writes an elaborate treatise in which he gives diagrams showing a cross section of the gullets, with the estimated capacity in cubic inches, of every fish which ever swam in the Mediterranean, to show that no fish could by any possibility have swallowed Jonah. A very commendable piece of work, if one cares to do that sort of thing. But suppose we frankly call the book a poem or an allegory. Does your boy care whether Robinson Crusoe is a real or an imaginary person? I would set some great imaginative artist at work illustrating this poem in colors, for a child's reader. He should show Jonah at the wharf, amid the bales of merchandise, he should catch the

very atmosphere of the sea, the laboring galley, the racing waves, the flying scud. And the fish should be a splendid monster, larger than the ship itself, and quite capable of carrying the prophet to his destination. I would have the text printed in good large black English letters, and if I had a child with soul so dead and imagination so feeble, as to ask if it was true, I should say; "Yes, my dear, just as your Pilgrim's Progress is true, go and learn it by heart." No amount of scientific criticism will ever take away the charm of the Bible as a literary commentary upon life. In a recent number of "*Harper's Magazine*," Richard Le Gallienne has a delightful sketch of an old-fashioned French house and garden. No one would ever accuse Richard Le Gallienne of an excess of reverence, or of superstitious regard for the Scriptures, and yet the most exquisite touch in the sketch comes from his use of the story of the shadow turning back upon the dial in the royal gardens of King Hezekiah. The author does not stop to think that the scientific experts have decided that the story is nothing but a fable. He sees the marvellous significance of the truth which shines beneath the story—truth, fable, poetry—name it how you will, and adapts it to his

own use in his own interpretation of life, in the form of literature. The point is this: Literature will always exert a profound influence upon life. What shall be the dominant underlying force in our national literature? Shall it be the pagan element, or the merely frivolous spirit of the hour, or that deep perennial fountain which wells up in Chaucer's speech, which animated Shakespeare's times, which reappears throughout the whole range of life and literature since the Reformation. We ought to stimulate the study of the highest and the best, not trusting to accidental impressions, but including the precious literature of the Bible in a scientifically elaborated scheme of education and training.

2. The recovery of the original background and atmosphere of Biblical literature.

The interpretation of the Bible in the past has been largely theological and philosophical. Men have asked how does this and that passage fit into this or that scheme of theology. The human warmth and color which everywhere illuminates the Bible has been ignored or neglected. In this respect the scientific critic has been as deficient as the ancient theological interpreter. Each is looking for data, one for

speculative data, the other for tangible facts. The scholar who is seeking to serve men through his study of the Bible will strive to bring back the faded colors of the canvas and reanimate the great scenes of the past. To illustrate what I mean, let us suppose I am sitting once more beneath the English hedgerows near my old cathedral. Again a scholar shares my seat. Like the first, he knows the facts in regard to the builder and the date of the gray old pile. But he knows more. For hours I sit in wrapt attention as he tells me of the men and women whose lives are interwoven in its history. He tells me how the tides of war rolled against its buttresses, as the tides of the sea roll against the castled cliffs. He tells me of the bishop who stood with his back to the altar and fought a dozen men at arms, who leaped at his throat like a pack of famished wolves. I see the bridal party come pricking across the meadow, white with the buds of May, I hear the great organ roll out its dirge for the dead, and the clear voice of the monks as they sing the even-song when the darkness falls and the peaceful night closes down and wraps the cloisters in shadows. Before, I had merely an aesthetic enjoyment in the old building, now I love it because every stone has its

history and speaks to me of an heroic past. The Bible will mean infinitely more to men and women who have small time to work out for themselves the intricacies of textual criticism, but whose hearts are ready to respond to the vital touch of personal interest if the old life could be restored for them. No canvas was ever painted with such infinite variety of life as this, depicted with the sure touch of personal insight, with supreme dramatic power. I am interested in Paul, the theologian, but I am infinitely more interested in Paul the man, as I can see him climbing amid the clouds, along the perilous path which leads to the squalid mountain villages of Galatia, or standing upon the prow of a great corn-laden merchant-man which is breasting the seas off Sicily, on his way to the imperial city by the Tiber. I would give more to know from the student of antiquity just how Corinth looked with its miles of wharves, its storehouses piled with the riches of the Orient, its glorious temples shining in the sun, just what was the character of the life which swept up and down its streets, than for volumes of expositions upon Paul's theology. When we read our Lord's discourses by the Sea of Galilee, it adds wonderfully to the effect to be able to see the lake

under the old conditions, to know that Jesus heard night and morning the Roman trumpets blow, and saw the standards of the legions gleaming upon the heights; to know that luxurious barges breathing music and perfume, swept by his rough fishing boat, as the disciples pulled at the heavy oars. Is it not our duty to put that life of Jesus in all its infinite graciousness and charm, as vividly as possible before men? It is not simply the words which the Master spoke, it is that life itself, that divine love incarnated in the lips that spoke, and the hand that touched, the brother who died for us, and dying taught us how to live, that moves men so mightily. Is it not better to give the world one fresh vision of the Master's life as it was actually lived, than to spend over much time in discussing questions which never can be satisfactorily answered? Already the scholars have given us rich material for our background of Bible literature, to-morrow the explorer's pick may reveal the details of a civilization older than the days of Abraham. There can be no more rewarding work than that which affords us glimpses of the actual life of prophet and patriarch, and enables us to reconstruct the times in which they lived.

3. The recovery of the original motive of Biblical literature.

It has been held in times past that the Bible, being a revelation of divine truth, was unalterably and unchangeably true at any point and for all times. We owe a great debt to scholarship for the recognition of the fact that the various books of the Bible are of unequal value and importance, but even scholarship has not yet clearly recognized the necessity of comprehending the motive of any particular utterance, the necessity of our putting ourselves in the place of the author when he wrote. There has been much criticism of the Old Testament on the ground that certain portions are unethical, even barbarous and brutal in expression. It might be considered questionable taste on the part of scholars who belong to nations which believe in expansion by means of Gatling gun and repeating rifle, to criticise the ethical tone of the Old Testament. The campaigns of Joshua and the exploits of the allies in China would compare well in parallel columns. The hosts of Christendom could even give the Israelite warriors points on the artistic finish of certain forms of atrocity. Of course this is no justification of Old Testament standards of morality, but it ought at least to

send us back with an inquiry as to the conditions and motives which gave rise to the literature. When you examine the conditions candidly, you will hardly expect men of a barbarous age to act consistently and steadily under impulses to which even our own enlightened age is not always faithful. The student will find, however, together with the horrors of war, a passion for holiness, a simplicity, a tenderness, a faith, unmatched in history. If he finds imprecatory psalms, he also finds the "Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." This duality of motive and expression demands study and explanation, above all it demands intelligent appreciation of primitive conditions. When this study is made with sympathy, it will be found that the Bible is the faithful record of the struggle of two adverse forces, the human nature, savage, brutal, domineering ; the divine nature, at work upon the lower force, with infinite persistence and patience. The story is of a divine evolutionary force steadily making for righteousness. If your history of this movement is to be truthful, you can no more leave out the hoof and claw and nail, than you can leave out the holy aspiration which sought God and found him. To differentiate these elements, to give a carefully

balanced and accurate picture of life as it was actually lived under the pull of the brute nature and the persuasion of the divine, this is a task worthy the highest scholarship. Such a study involves something more than a scrutiny of facts or an arraignment of ancient civilization on the basis of the highest standards of modern life. It demands an investigation at once scientific and sympathetic, of the entire phenomena of life in Biblical times. When this is done there will be no more criticism of the men who toiled and suffered in the darkness ; there will be appreciation of their struggles, understanding of their failures, admiration for their victories, thanksgiving for the inheritance which they transmitted to us, who are the more fortunate possessors of the promised land which they dimly described, but might never enter.

4. The application of the literature of the Bible to the necessities of modern life.

The application of the Bible to life as well as the interpretation of the Bible, has been prevailingly theological; it ought to be direct and personal. At this point scholarship can be of very large service. It should interpret the Bible in terms of original motive, it must then tell us how to apply this interpretation in order to affect

motive to-day. The object of the church is above all things else, redemptive. The Bible is unquestionably one of the greatest agencies in redemption. How shall we use it so that it will have the greatest effect upon the greatest number? This is a question before which all merely technical criticism sinks into insignificance. Here is a book which is unique in literature. It is dynamic, inspirational, to an extraordinary degree. From cover to cover it is alive, its pages are thronged with men and women who speak to us with matchless dramatic interest and power. How shall the preacher use this book, how shall the church teach it so that the power which is in it may enter into life as it has done in the past? The answer involves a study of human nature, of social conditions, more profound than has yet been made. When the solution is reached there will be a new Reformation, the greatest of all the ages.

Finally, let us insist that the critical study of the Bible is a necessary part of the intellectual movement of the age. It is no more to be resented than is the rising of the sun. The right to question is a part of our inalienable inheritance from God. All honor to the scholars whose patient and often unrecognized toil has given us a text

of the Bible so free from corruptions, and has contributed so largely to our better understanding of the Scriptures. But let us also insist that the Bible is a book of literature and of religion, and that the canons of criticism employed should be primarily literary and spiritual. No one thinks of taking Shakespeare into the biological laboratory for examination, or of treating the poems of Tennyson as though they were mathematical treatises, or modern census reports. Why should the Bible be examined upon an unnatural and illogical basis? However keen the critic may be, let him be reverent. If there is one thing in all the world from which the irreverent man should keep his profane hands, it is the holy Bible. All criticism should be constructive, not truth for truth's sake alone, should be the student's purpose, but truth for humanity's sake, humanity which still sins and fears and struggles after God.

The church may rest in serene confidence while this process of investigation goes on. The sacred shrine of the Bible has not been despoiled by vandals and it never will be. The Bible can no more become obsolete than the plays of Shakespeare. It has in it the principle of immortal youth. Humanity will never turn its face away from the

light to the blank wall of scepticism and despair, but the Bible will continue to be the book which men love best, to which they look for hope and faith and freedom.

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